



COUNTY COMMISSION  
SHELBY COUNTY  
P. O. BOX 467  
COLUMBIANA, AL 35051

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January 4, 2017

Ms. Crystal Davis  
Alabama Department Economic and Community Affairs  
Community and Economic Development Programs Division  
401 Adams Avenue  
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Ms. Davis:

The Shelby County Commission is pleased to have the opportunity to submit an application for funds made available through the Recreational Trails Program Grant (RTP) for the construction of approximately 5.5 miles of multi-use trails along with a trailhead facility providing recreational amenities along the Cahaba River. These projects will be created in partnership with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Forever Wild Land Trust. The partners are ready to begin construction to welcome the public to this extraordinary recreational destination along the Cahaba River.

Enclosed please find one original pre-application and one digital copy for the 2017-2018 RTP grant program. If you have any questions regarding the application, please call Chad Scroggins at (205) 620-6653 or [cscroggins@shelbyal.com](mailto:cscroggins@shelbyal.com).

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Dudchock".

Alex Dudchock  
County Manager  
Shelby County, Alabama

ENCL: One original pre-application and one digital copy

# FY2017-18 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

## PRE-APPLICATION FORM

**DEADLINE: NOON, FRIDAY, January 6, 2017**

Applicant's Name (Organization): Shelby County Commission

Address: P.O. Box 467

Columbiana, AL

ZIP:35051

County: Shelby

FEI Number: 63-6001694

DUNS Number: 07-546-1137

Project Title (6 words max): Forever Wild Trails - Cahaba River Park

Project Description (25 words max):

Trailhead facility with parking and more than 5 miles of trails will be constructed serving hikers, bikers, trail runners connecting access to the Cahaba River.

Park Name, if applicable: Shelby County Cahaba River Park / Forever Wild Land Trust – Cahaba River

Park Address: River Road / County Road 251

ZIP:

GPS Coordinates of Project  
(in degrees):

33 10 39.208; -87 0 49.232

Congressional District: AL 6

State Senate District: 14

State House District: 49

Applicant Chief Elected Official,  
Director, or President:

Alex Dudchock, County Manager

Phone and Email: 205-670-6500 / adudchock@shelbyal.com

Grant Administrator or  
Other Contact:

Christie Pannell-Hester

Phone and Email: 205-620-6623 / cpannell@shelbyal.com

### **Project Descriptive Narrative**

Provide a brief, yet informative, description of the proposed project; address each evaluation criterion on the following pages (provide additional narrative and documents as may be needed to support your response to each evaluation criterion); and include a cost estimate, a preliminary site plan, plat and/or legal description, and location map.

### **Project Information**

Name of Project: Forever Wild Trails - Cahaba River Park

Trail Length in Linear Feet (L.F.): 29,375 Trail Width: 24"-36" wide

Trail Surface Type: Natural Soil Surface

Application Type: ☐ Non-motorized for a Single Use ☐ Motorized  
☒ Non-motorized for Diverse Use ☐ Educational

Type of Applicant: ☐ City/Town ☒ County  
☐ State ☐ Private Organization

Total Estimated Project Cost	\$ <u>285,520.00</u>
Grant Amount Requested	\$ <u>200,000.00</u>
Total Local Match	\$ <u>85,520.00</u>
Cash Match	\$ <u>85,520.00</u>
In-Kind Match	\$ _____
Donation	\$ _____

#### **Brief Description of the Project:**

A trailhead facility will be constructed to provide parking, shelter and access to existing double track and proposed single-track trails on Forever Wild Property. More than 5 miles of single-track trails will be constructed to serve hikers, mountain bikers, and trail runners while connecting access to the Cahaba River and potentially the Cahaba Blueway. These projects will transform unused land into a unique recreational area available for public enjoyment both locally and regionally.

**Please address each evaluation criterion and insert your answers below each (120 Total Available Points).**

- 1. Describe the degree to which the project's scope and feasibility meet the project area's recreational needs. (Key Consideration: Does the project appear to be feasible and incorporate a good project design with consideration given to the natural and cultural environment in which the project is located, and appropriate consideration given to needs and benefits?) 10 Points Available**

The Shelby County Commission previously purchased 315 acres of property along the Cahaba River anticipating a unique regional recreational destination providing diverse trail and water amenities to the public. The Forever Wild Land Trust purchased the remaining 1,149 acres of property to be managed by Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands Division that would protect sensitive natural features along the diverse Cahaba River. The combined property totals 1,464 acres and provides a rare partnership to not only protect and conserve the natural resources along the Cahaba River but also transform undeveloped land into publicly accessible recreational opportunities including hiking, mountain biking, trail running, birding, camping and canoeing. This project will provide pedestrian and water access as a recreation area and nature preserve to the only free-flowing river in Alabama. The proposed trails and facilities will be constructed in a sustainable method to ensure the natural integrity of the project sites. Project funding is requested to construct a trailhead facility with parking and minimally the initial 5.5 miles of multi-use non-motorized contract bid and constructed trail on the preliminary master plan. This proposed trail will connect in several places to the existing double track/logging roads that currently exist on the properties and are to be maintained by Shelby County. The Shelby County Commission has invested significant money to improve access to the site off County Road 13 and committed to coordinate recreational amenities identified through a master planning process.

- 2. Describe the ways in which the project provides for the greatest number of compatible recreational purposes. (Key Consideration: An important concern is that this project will enhance the quality and quantity of recreational trail opportunities available in the community or region. Maximum points will be given to projects with connectivity to other trails or parks, environmental education and preservation, and economic development opportunities.) 10 Points Available**

The subject site is situated along the environmentally sensitive Cahaba River and Shades Creek in Shelby and Bibb Counties with the Shelby County Commission, Forever Wild Land Trust, and Living Rivers Retreat as adjoining property owners ensuring the project and adjacent areas are designated for recreation, preservation and education purposes. The Shelby County Commission is coordinating recreation trail amenities including river and trail access for the 315-acre County parkland and developing canoe and trail access on the 1,464-acre Forever Wild Land. A master plan is in development and identifies initial trailheads with parking and restroom facilities and multi-use trails for biking, hiking, and canoeing the Cahaba River thus connecting to the Cahaba Blueway. Other recreation activities identified in the Alabama Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan will be available to the public such as open space relaxing, viewing scenery, birding, picnicking, and backcountry/canoe access camping. Although tremendous recreational and environmental education opportunities exist with the resources offered by area land owners and stakeholders, the first order of business is to “get the doors open”, so to speak. Continued investment in the trail system will further enhance economic development opportunities.

A trailhead facility with parking will provide access to repurposed old jeep and logging roads and proposed singletrack trails. The trailhead will also provide a pavilion to be used for shelter and picnicking allowing longer stays and access to diverse recreational opportunities. The terrain of the property is gently rolling with elevations between 320-feet to 540-feet. The trail is designed as a stacked loop system with a moderate flow that will encourage family and novice trail users as well as create expanded route alternatives. The stacked loop system will offer a variety and multiple skill level trails, increase ride options, accommodate a wide variety of users and minimize congestion through additional trail mileage for all user groups. The sustainable trail design and construction will create a desirable trail that supports many diverse activities and facilitate appropriate trail and property maintenance. The trail will be open to many types of users thus increasing recreational opportunities for compatible user groups (trail runners, mountain bikers and hikers) and for people of all ages and skill levels in the region.

3. **Describe the ways in which the project provides a new, unique, or more effective means for making trail opportunities available to the public. (Key Consideration:** This criterion includes projects of national, regional, and local demonstration value. The most important concern is whether the grant recipient is committed to trying an approach that is new at the local level. Additional points are awarded for nationwide applicability and statewide or regional value. The applicant must commit to documenting the results of the demonstration.) **10 Points Available**

Four of the top five outdoor recreation activity preferences identified in the SCORP, walking for pleasure, trail hiking, driving for pleasure, and jogging will be available at the Shelby County Cahaba River Park / Forever Wild Land Trust – Cahaba River through the partner's commitment to making trail and recreational opportunities available to the public. This project will serve as a model for cooperative projects in an environmentally sensitive area of the Cahaba River. All partners are committed to conservation goals with the added public benefit of a recreational destination integrating outdoor experiences, trails and the Cahaba Blueway. A collective partnership with the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED), ADCNR, and Shelby County integrates land and water resources creating an innovative collaboration to connect Blueways with traditional non-motorized diverse use trails. This initial project will leverage County, State and Federal resources and funds to create a sustainable recreational destination with approximately 20 miles of trail alternatives, diverse activity opportunities and length of stay options for visitors locally, regionally and statewide.

**4. Describe the ways in which the project facilitates the access and use of trails by persons with disabilities, older citizens, economically disadvantaged, and other special populations or groups. (Key Consideration: Whether this project will expand recreation opportunities for special populations with recreation deficiencies.) 10 Points Available**

The moderate, sustainable trail design will provide diverse recreational opportunities for a range of ages (children to older citizens) while adding trail options/routes for premier athletes. This project will appeal to a variety of age and socioeconomic groups by providing a trailhead with parking to access alternative routes to offer exposure to a variety and multiple skill levels of trails therefore, increasing recreation options during their visit. Alabama has one of the highest obesity rates in the nation and this enhanced trail system will encourage more physical activity through outdoor experiences by providing diverse and multiple routes that support individual skill/fitness levels. Biking and walking are two of the most economical fitness activities open to any person regardless of the fitness level or income level. This diverse trail system resides on public lands, creating access for everyone. Public lands recreation is still one of the least expensive forms of recreation for economically disadvantaged persons. Other recreation activities identified in the Alabama Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan will be available to the public such as open space relaxing, viewing scenery, birding, picnicking, and in time, camping thus facilitating access and use of trails by persons with disabilities, older citizens, economically disadvantaged, and other special populations or groups.

- 5. Describe the ways in which the project creates opportunities for new partnerships between trail users, private interests, and public agencies within the project area. (Key Consideration: The major concern is that this project is a component of an integrated effort to enhance economic revitalization and community conservation. Maximum points will be given to applicants providing evidence of cooperative efforts with trail user groups and/or multiple public meetings.) 10 Points Available**

Shelby County has worked with public and private stakeholders in the proposed site area for 10 years actively supporting the purchase of property by Forever Wild for preservation and public access. The County and the nearby City of Helena understood the importance of protecting the sensitive natural features along the diverse Cahaba River. The combined property totals 1,464 acres and provides a rare partnership to not only protect and conserve the natural resources along the Cahaba River but also transform undeveloped land into publicly accessible recreational opportunities including hiking, mountain biking, trail running, birding, backcountry camping and canoeing. The County has held conversations with the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED) on access and signage for the Cahaba Blueway project. Potential projects with UACED for Cahaba Blueway include site development best practices, as improvements will provide a safe, durable, and environmentally sustainable access for canoeing and other recreational activities on the river. UACED is working with multiple partners in communities all along the Cahaba to create similar access points and to designate the first official Cahaba Blueway sites over the next year. A collective partnership with the UACED, ADCNR, and Shelby County integrates land and water resources creating an innovative collaboration to connect Blueways with traditional non-motorized diverse use trails.

RTP funds will leverage County, State and Federal resources and funds to create a sustainable recreational destination with approximately 20 miles of trail alternatives and increased multi day activities promoting overnight stays for park visitors from across the region and state. The National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) is interested in partnering to host the Alabama High School Mountain Bike League races or similar events because of the proposed moderate trail design and length of trails. The Alabama Interscholastic Cycling League was organized in 2015 to provide mountain biking programs for students in grades 6 to 12. With the cooperation of local volunteer coaches, schools, league partners, and sponsors we are able to provide a high quality youth development program that fulfills our mission of getting more kids on bikes.



- 6. Describe the ways in which the project uses the grant funds to leverage other public or private investments (in the form of services and materials as well as dollars). (Key Consideration: The major concern is whether actual leveraging is assured or the potential for leveraging is good, outside of any funds committed for the initial grant match. Maximum points will be given for applicants committing double the minimum local match or higher.) 10 Points Available**

The Shelby County Commission is coordinating recreation trail amenities including river and trail access for the 315-acre County park land and developing canoe and trail access on the 1,212-acre Forever Wild Land. A master plan is in development and identifies the proposed initial trailheads with parking and restroom facilities and multi-use trails for biking, hiking, and canoeing the Cahaba River. The County Commission is committed to double the minimum local match on the proposed RTP project. The County will continue to leverage lodging tax revenues to assist in park improvement, development and maintenance. Specifically, the County will construct a restroom and trailhead pavilion, as well as canoe launch sites and approximately 2.5 miles of new trails. This initial RTP project will leverage County, State and Federal resources and funds to create a sustainable recreational destination with approximately 20 miles of trail alternatives, diverse activity opportunities and length of stay options for visitors locally, regionally and statewide. We plan to leverage RTP funds and initial investment to acquire additional funding for the master plan projects from private foundations.

- 7. Describe the degree of commitment to continue operation and maintenance of the project. Include an operation and maintenance plan detailing the amount of money needed to operate and maintain the trail after it is completed and identify who will be responsible for the work. (Key Consideration: Whether the grant recipient is willing to commit to continue the maintenance and operation of the project and whether the applicant provides a realistic operation and maintenance plan/budget. Additional points will be awarded to applicants demonstrating innovative funding measures for trail maintenance.) 10 Points Available**

The Shelby County Commission is committed to maintenance and establishing partnerships to continue investment in the Cahaba River Park recognizing it as a valuable asset to the community not only environmentally and recreationally but economically as well. The Commission has an effective partnership with ADCNR as evidenced by the many successful projects at Oak Mountain State Park with capital facility and infrastructure improvements for a number of years. The County will continue to leverage revenues to assist in park improvement, development and maintenance. The initial total mileage potentially maintained by the county is approximately 20 miles of single and double track trails. The County will continue to work with the Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers (BUMP) for trail building expertise and maintenance best practices. BUMP is a 501(c)3 non-profit group that successfully maintains the mountain bike trails at Oak Mountain State Park and Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park.

8. **The degree to which community involvement is addressed: i.e., (A) Project idea originated with trail users or a community group that has substantial knowledge, and (B) The private sector (including individual citizens, community groups, or local business enterprises) has participated in the development of the proposed idea and has made commitments of labor, money, or materials to support proposed implementation. (Key Consideration: The objective is to determine if the project is responding to citizen-identified needs. The priority of the project to users is evidenced by citizen support for the idea. Additional points will be awarded to applicants demonstrating that the project concept was originally proposed at the grassroots level and, especially, for extensive citizen or private organization involvement in project development and support in project implementation. Maximum points will be awarded to applicants demonstrating extensive involvement and participation from citizens and interest groups during all phases of application development and commitments beyond.) 10 Points Available**

The County has owned 315 acres for approximately 10 years. Within that time frame, the Forever Wild Land Trust has purchased land from a private land owner in two separate transactions that adjoins the County property. The most recent Forever Wild purchase in late October 2016 provided a total offering of public lands that could provide recreational trails and related amenities. The County is coordinating recreation trail amenities in conjunction with the ADCNR State Lands Division and has held conversations with trail users and community groups such as National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), BUMP, the Backcountry Horseman of America, Central Alabama Chapter Back (BCHA), the Nature Conservancy and Cahaba Blueway partners to acquire initial park use thoughts that will assist in continued development of the master plan for the public lands.

In late 2014- 2015, the County developed and facilitated an online survey for Oak Mountain State Park to gather input on facility improvements needed and potential amenities to be considered for future recreational opportunities. The survey provided valuable data on recreational amenities that are important to visitors seeking an outdoor experience. Trail systems, mountain biking and hiking, were most frequently identified as a desirable amenity that keeps visitors returning. The County realizes that continued investment in trails and recreational amenities is a priority for residents and visitors.

**9. Describe in detail how the trail will be managed. Include discussion on season length, hours of operation, limitations on use, enforcement provisions, and scheduling. 10 Points Available**

The Shelby County Cahaba River Park / Forever Wild Land Trust – Cahaba River is open daily year round. Shelby County will construct a caretaker home on Shelby County property that will house a law enforcement officer on-site to ensure security access. There will be no limitations on use with the exception that it will be limited to non-motorized activities such as running, hiking, and biking.

**10. Identify and describe the service area of the project. Approximately how many people do you propose to serve with this project? Identify other trail resources in the service area by trail type (motorized, non-motorized, multi-use), distance, location in relation to the proposed trail, and ownership. (Key Consideration: The RTP was created to address trail needs in the urban and rural areas of the state. In order to assess the need for additional trails it is first necessary to identify the quantity and location of existing resources within the service area. It is also necessary to establish a service area – either population or resource based. For example, a population based service area could be a neighborhood, school district, or political jurisdiction whereas, a resource based service area might be defined along a linear greenway, water course, or unique natural/cultural area. However, in both instances, an estimate of the number of beneficiaries should be provided.) 10 Points Available**

The Shelby County Cahaba River Park / Forever Wild Land Trust – Cahaba River is located in an unincorporated area of Shelby and Bibb Counties near the center of the State located primarily in Region 3 and crossing into Region 2. The subject site is a large natural ecosystem within the environmentally sensitive Cahaba Watershed located in the Birmingham-Hoover MSA. The recreational area will initially serve day use visitors as nearby overnight options are limited. Future plans include limited backcountry/canoe camp sites and extensions to trail and blueway connections that will provide a mix of day and overnight visitors. The rural location and diverse recreational amenities marks this as a distinctive destination in an underserved area. According to recent population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2014 population of the Birmingham-Hoover MSA was 1,143,772. Nearby recreation trails are located in Oak Mountain State Park and the Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park.

**11. Identify the length of time the trail will be maintained and open and available to the public and identify the method to be used to ensure this commitment (deed covenant, deed restriction, etc.). (Key Consideration: The objective is to utilize RTP funds to the greatest extent possible by ensuring the improvements are maintained and available for public trail use as long as possible. Points will only be awarded to applicants exceeding the minimum required timeframe for a trail development project to remain open to the public. Maximum points will be awarded to applicants electing to maintain the improvements in perpetuity.) 15 Points Available**

The trail system will be open daily year round according to the park's hours of operation.

The trail will be accessible to visitors with no limitations on use with the exception that it will be limited to non-motorized activities such as running, hiking, and biking and comply with the Forever Wild guidelines. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is being developed to allow Shelby County to be responsible for the long term maintenance of the trail system to insure that public use is maintained. All trails proposed in this grant request will be built on public property either owned by the Shelby County or the Forever Wild Land Trust with the majority on the State FWLT properties managed by ADCNR State Lands Division. As part of the Forever Wild Land Trust, the properties as deed restricted for public use and the potential investment in trails will be on these protected lands.

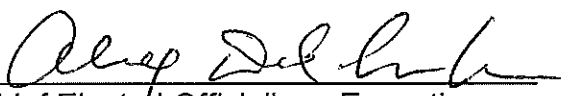
**12. The Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) and the High Efficiency Trail Assessment Process (HETAP) are methods of obtaining and recording objective data related to outdoor, natural environments. They are tools that land managers, agencies, and individuals can utilize to learn about, monitor, improve, and encourage the safe and enjoyable use of any outdoor path of travel. Points are available to project sponsors committing to the assessment of the trail and installation of Trail Access Information signage. (Key Consideration: The assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance is an eligible RTP project cost and can be included in the project budget. For projects such as the development of trailhead and trailside facilities, points may still be obtained if the sponsor commits to the assessment of the trail(s) for which the support facilities are being constructed.) 5 Points Available**

The County has staff trained and in the process of becoming certified in the UTAP and HETAP assessment and will commit to the assessment and installation of Trail Access Information signage for the project.

**NOTE:** Property acquired with RTP funds must remain open to the public in perpetuity. Should the property cease to be open to the public for trail use, the applicant must repay the RTP 80% of the fair market value of the property at the time of the change in use. If the project is located on an easement or on leased land, the minimum timeframe for the easement or lease is 25 years. The project must remain open for public access for the use for which the RTP funds were intended during that time. For development projects on applicant owned property, the project must remain open for public access for the use for which the RTP funds were intended for a minimum of 25 years.

Total Project Cost: \$285,520.00 Funds Requested: \$200,000.00

**Important Note:** The maximum grant amount by trail type is **\$70,000.00** for non-motorized, single-use trails; **\$200,000.00** for non-motorized, diverse-use trails; **\$500,000.00** for motorized trails, or **\$87,489.00** for education projects.

  
(Chief Elected Official's or Executive  
Director's/President's Signature)

County Manager  
(Title)

1/5/2017  
(Date)